

Instructions For Nasopharyngeal (NP) Tests for Respiratory Viruses

1. Prepare to take specimen:

- Order test directly in Sunquest or complete Los Angeles County Public Health Laboratory (PHL) Laboratory Test Requisition Form (available online at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/lab/labforms.htm>)
- Explain procedure to patient.
- Wash hands with soap and water or sanitizer.
- Apply gloves and regular surgical mask.
- Open the package containing transport media and swab and set up for specimen collection and disposal of infectious waste.
- Label specimen transport media with two-unique patient identifiers and date of collection - May use Sunquest barcode label or if using manual request, print information legibly on transport media container.



2. Take specimen:

- If there is a lot of mucus in the patient's nose, instruct patient to blow nose before swabbing.
- Open swab, avoid contaminating tip of swab. (*It is important to only use the small flexible swab designed for this procedure.*)
- For testing young children, instruct parents to hold child to keep still during procedure.
- Have patient tilt head backward. Gently press back tip of nose to open nostril.
- Insert swab GENTLY through the nostril parallel to the palate into the nasopharynx (*about half the distance from the tip of the nose to the ear*).
- Rotate swab a few times and gently remove.



3. Finish test:

- Place swab immediately into tube containing transport media.
- Break off end of swab stick at the red mark or scored shaft. Securely place cap on tube.
- Place specimen in zip-lock pocket of biohazard transport bag. Place accompanying labels or test requisition in side pocket.
- Immediately store specimen until transport in refrigerator at 2° - 8° C (**Do not freeze!**).



4. Specimen transportation:

- Transport specimens with cold pack to PHL as soon as possible – usually within 24 hours and no longer than 72 hours post-collection.
- Routine scheduled courier can collect specimens and deliver to the Public Health Lab.
- For urgent situations requiring expedited testing, arrange for courier pickup by calling PHL Central Accessioning at 562-658-1460.

